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" I left him holding the picture with one hand, and waving me good-night with the other, a gentle smile upon his venerable face."

[Page 96.]

W. H. T.aker, Oliver Harr

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EVENINGS WITH UNCLE 'BIJAH

OR

Christian Fellowship

BY THE

Author of "Herbert Brown,"

"Dick Haley," Etc.



Under the Convenient Title of the
Rev. Richard Grote, A. M., D. D.



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TO THE

AMERICAN BOOK CONCERN

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*To My Former Students,
Especially Theological, and
to All Lovers of a True and
Genuine CHRISTIAN FEL-
LOWSHIP.*

PREFACE

“Would to God that all the party names and unscriptural phrases and forms were forgotten, and that we might all agree to sit down together, as humble, loving disciples at the feet of our common Master, to hear His Word, to imbibe His Spirit, to transcribe His life into our own. And who are we that we should withstand God? Particularly by laying down rules of Christian communion which exclude any whom he has admitted into the Church of the First-born from worshiping God together. O, that all church governors would consider how bold a usurpation this is on the supreme Lord of the Church! O, that the sin of thus withstanding God may be laid to the charge of those who, perhaps with a good intention, but in an over-fondness for their own forms, have done it, and are doing it continually.”—*John Wesley.*

Evenings With Uncle 'Bijah or Christian Fellowship

INTRODUCTION

“UNCLE 'BIJAH, why do you not join the church?” I asked the question of the best known citizen of our town, an old man of education and culture, strict integrity and undoubted Christian life. He was a conservative and successful business man, had served as a member of his state legislature, and was the principal organizer and president of the National Bank of the town.

“Don't suit me,” was his laconic and unsatisfactory reply.

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"Don't suit you?" I repeated.
"What doesn't suit you?"

"The churches."

"But I didn't ask you to join the churches, Uncle 'Bijah," I said, smiling.

"O no, I know," he replied, conclusively.

But I had prepared for this. I had become thoroughly acquainted with the interesting old man before me, I might almost say familiar with him. He was a frequent attendant at my services, I had often met and talked with him on the streets or in the park, and twice had had the pleasure of walking with him over his farm and through his well-kept orchard. Before broaching this subject to him I had studied the matter over carefully, and had made up my mind that I

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would not let the matter rest (nor him either) until I had fathomed the depth of his mind. And so, all undaunted, I said, as courteously as I could:

"Well, *what* do you know, Uncle 'Bijah?"

There was a slight twinkle in his clear old eyes, and I thought I detected also the faintest glint of sharpness, as he replied:

"I reckon you were inviting me to join *your* church?"

"Certainly. You do not think I would be inviting you to join some other, do you?"

"No," he replied, with an intonation and modulation that fairly made me start. I glanced quickly and keenly at his face, but it was calm as a summer evening. I was not. I was

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conscious that I presented much the appearance of a dog baying a porcupine, and getting a quill in his nose every time he got too close.—Yet, not a porcupine; for the dear old man was anything than that.

“Uncle 'Bijah,” I said, attempting to assume all the dignity and calmness possible, “was not your wife a member of the church?”

“Yes.”

“May I ask what church?”

“Methodist.”

“Your parents?” I asked, attempting to imitate his briefness.

“Baptists.”

“Your children?”

He thought a moment, then quietly replied:

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"Two are Methodists, one a Presbyterian, and the other a Congregationalist."

"That is all your family?"

"My closest relations," he replied, looking quietly at me; and then, apparently reading my thought, he added: "so far as I know all my ancestors were church members."

"And you?" I askt.

"And I," he quietly replied.

I confess I was nettled. All that he had told me I already knew. In asking those questions I had simply "backed off" to gain momentum; and here I was—stuck fast just where I had started. Suddenly the situation flashed upon me: I was questioning an absolutely honorable man in a dishonorable manner—as tho he were a criminal, and I an attorney trying to

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uncover his guilt—as tho he were a culprit, and I a magistrate trying to force a confession. I was also conscious that he had come pretty near turning the table on me. Something akin to a feeling of guilt overwhelmed me, and I felt a strong inclination to ask his forgiveness. I did not do that, but I did turn to him frankly, with more, I suspect, in my face than in my words, and said:

“Uncle 'Bijah, I want to apologize for my manner of approaching you on this subject.”

The look on his face I shall never forget. I recall it with perfect vividness as I write to-day, tho many snows have fallen upon his sacred mound since then. It was a look of mingled kindness, amusement, sympathy, and what more I cannot tell.

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"No ground for that," he said quietly. "The fault was mine. It is a subject I have never much discussed—in fact, have always rather avoided."

"Believing as you do in Christianity," I said, "and standing as you do aloof from the church, I cannot but feel that you possess some ideas that would be extremely interesting and profitable to me if you would but give me your full and frank views of this subject."

"I fear you are very much mistaken in those regards," he replied, and then after a moment's thoughtful silence, he added, "however, the manner in which you make your request compels me to be equally frank and open with you. I shall willingly give you any information I may possess,

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tho it must of necessity be very meagre. May be you would be willing to step in awhile this evening?"

"I would," I replied, heartily, "and I thank you for the courtesy. Good day, Uncle 'Bijah."

I confess I was in somewhat of a flutter. I'm ashamed to confess it, but I was. I had some confidence—in fact, much confidence—in my ability in my profession, the ministry, and I had some reason for it, for I had a thorough education, was an ex-college president, and was regarded by my associates in the profession as somewhat able in theology. I was at this time pastor of the Oaklawn Church, the leading church of the city. And here, on my own initiative, I had engaged this gentle old man in conversation on my own supposedly well-

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known ground, and had been worsted, so much so that I had felt it my duty to apologize; and that, too, without the slightest apparent effort on his part. "But," I said to myself, as I returned to the parsonage, "it was not a discussion of theology; in truth, it was scarce a reference to theology. It was simply a case of bad judgment and poor tactics; but the apology was heartily accepted, and the offense as heartily forgiven. Why should I let a little thing like that 'upset me'?" And thus I dismissed the annoying little incident, and immediately found my mind occupied with conjecturing what the evening might bring forth. What explanation could this practical, cultured, courteous old man, who believes in and practices Christianity, who is a regular attendant at divine

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worship, offer for not uniting with the church whose worship he attends and participates in? What answer could he give to my question that would be consistent with his position? Would not the inconsistencies be so glaring that they would be their own refutation as soon as stated? We must wait and see.

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THE clock was striking eight when I entered the hall and was welcomed into the old-fashioned resting-room of Uncle 'Bijah. It was not a library, it was not a study, it was not a "den;" it was a combination of all of them, or, rather, it combined some of the features of each of them. I recall an old-fashioned fireplace, in which the fire blazed cheerfully, three or four chairs of as many different patterns, a strong leather-covered couch, bearing marks of some age, and two large book-cases filled with books.

"Will you lay your coat and hat on

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the lounge there, Mr. Grote, and have that chair?" said my host.

"Thank you," I replied, complying.

"A little indication of storm?"

"I'm afraid there is," I replied.

There was a moment's silence.

"Well," said he, a kindly smile lighting his face, "you came to catechize me; proceed."

"No, Uncle 'Bijah," I replied, "please do not put it that way; tho I concede that my impertinence this afternoon warrants your criticism. I merely wish to read your mind for my own meditation and improvement."

"I suspect you could find more profitable reading, tho possibly not more amusing, eh? Well, I guess you want me to answer your question: "Why don't I join the church?"

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"If you will be so kind."

"May be I can make myself clearer if I tell you first why I don't join *your* church."

"I should as soon hear that first," I said, smiling.

"My parents were both Friends, or 'Quakers'."

The inflection of his voice indicated that his answer was complete; but I felt certain that it was only his introductory statement, and that he would presently proceed, and I therefore waited. But he was silent.

"Do you mean that is your reason for not joining the Methodist Church?" I asked, incredulously.

"One," he replied in a tone of unwavering confidence.

"I fail to see the connection," I said.

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"I had the utmost faith in their lives, and especially their religion," he replied, his eyes fixed meditatively upon the fire.

"I feel sure that had I known them I should feel the same toward them," I said; "but pray tell me what does that have to do with this matter—unless," I added, a new thought flashing into my mind, "you mean that you hold the Quaker faith?"

"And if I do?" asked my companion, turning an interested glance toward me.

"Then I should not have asked you to unite with our church."

"Why?"

"I would not intentionally proselyte. I believe every one should place his membership where his faith is.

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Have you ever been a member of the Quaker Church?"

"No."

"Then you must have also a reason for not joining that church."

"I have—a better one."

"May I ask what it is?"

"Its peculiar doctrines are contrary to my faith."

I waited, hoping he would proceed, but he did not. Determined to get what I was so anxious to possess, I asked bluntly:

"How about the doctrines of the Methodist Church?"

"I think I have no serious objections to them."

"Then what prevents your uniting with our church?"

"My faith in my parents' religion, for one thing."

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"But how does that prevent?"

"Would they be admitted?"

"Probably not, with their peculiar views. But why should they want to be?"

"They would not."

"Well, you would not expect us to admit them when they did not wish to be admitted, would you?"

"O no, certainly not."

"Then I confess I fail to see your reason," I said, somewhat confused and not a little annoyed at the course our dialog had taken.

"The reason they would not ask for admission," he replied with the same calm confidence that had characterized his every step in our conversation. On the other hand I was much like a hound trying to follow a far leaping, oft turning quarry, now and

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again missing the trail, and as oft returning to pick up the scent;—nor was hound ever more determined to follow his quarry.

“What’s that?” I askt, endeavoring to pick up the lost trail.

“Your requirements contradict their faith.”

“Would you have us exchange our doctrines for the doctrines of the Quakers?”

“O no.”

“What then?”

“Mr. Grote,” said the old man, turning directly facing me, “could you conscientiously unite with the Baptist Church?”

“No; my views of the Bible would prevent my doing that.”

“Do you have any members that could not for the same reason?”

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"I have no doubt I have."

"Are they true Christians?"

"I think so."

"Among your best?"

"Probably so."

"As good as those that are in the Baptist Church?"

"I think so."

"Has it occurred to you that there might be something wrong about those particular doctrines by which such are shut out?"

"Well, yes; I confess that it has."

"Does it seem reasonable to you that if that be true, there may also be something wrong about the particular doctrines by which your church shuts out my parents and others equally true and good?"

"But why should they ask for admission to churches with which they

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do not agree? There are other denominations whose peculiar doctrines they believe; why do they not go there?"

"What is the purpose of the conditions of admission of the various churches?"

"I should rather hear you answer that, Uncle 'Bijah, for I am sure your answer would be of deep interest to me."

"What's a fanning-mill for?"

"I'm not sure that I know very much about that; but I have seen them at work. I think they are to clean the various grains for the farmer."

"Exactly; they're composed of a fan that blows the chaff and trash out, and a sieve that sifts the sand and dirt through, and thus leaves the

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pure grain. And that's my idea of the conditions of admission to the church. I wouldn't give much for a fanning-mill that blew over or sifted through more good wheat than it retained. Would you?"

"Have you a remedy to offer?" I asked, purposely avoiding a direct answer to his question.

"I know how to stop that in a fanning-mill," he replied, smiling, "and if you care to spend another evening with me I will think the matter over a little, and see if I can apply my knowledge of farming to the church—that is, if you would like to see how a barn door would look on a church."

The clock indicated half past nine, and I now remembered having heard Uncle 'Bijah remark that that was his regular time for retiring.

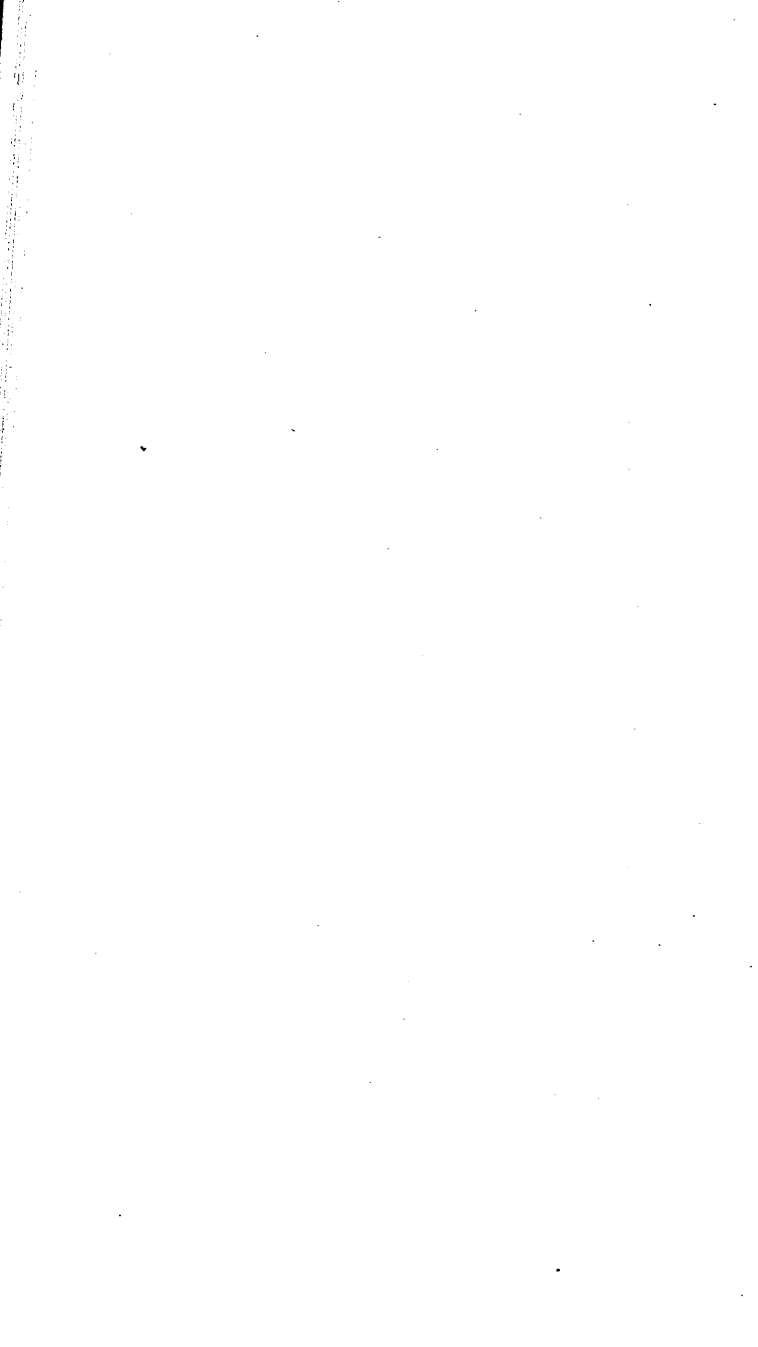
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"To-morrow night?" I asked, taking my hat and coat.

"If you will be so good," he replied, most graciously.

I walked two blocks past my own residence, and turned and retraced my steps; and half an hour later, when my wife entered my study and spoke my name, I started with a feeling that she was calling me to breakfast—no; it was supper—no; it was time for the church service—then her amused, merry laugh brought me to a realization of my surroundings, as she said:

"Dear, it's bedtime."



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“WELL, Uncle 'Bijah,” I said as I seated myself before the roaring hickory fire the following evening, “it’s the fanning-mill this evening.”

“I remember,” said my companion, smiling, but thoughtful. “The matter has been a great deal on my mind to-day, and I confess I find it a more difficult and serious subject than I had anticipated. I have reached one conclusion, however, that I feel sure of, and that is this: *It is more important that the church admit all the fit than that it shut out all the unfit.*” He paused a moment as if thinking the proposition over again, and then

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glancing keenly toward me asked: "What do you think of that?"

"I had never thought of it in just that way," I replied, "and should like to hear your reasons."

"Here they are," he said, carefully scanning a few neat notes on a sheet of paper before him: "There's the parable of the net cast into the sea that gathered of every kind, and Jesus said it was like the kingdom of heaven; there's the parable of the tares in the wheat that the servants were told to let alone lest they should throw out the wheat in trying to throw out the tares; there's Judas among the apostles, and Ananias and Sapphira in the church in the time of the apostles; and there are Paul's letters to the churches, especially to the Corinthians, showing clearly that

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many evil persons were in the churches in his time—in short, there seems to be abundant evidence that evil persons got into the churches even in the time of Christ and the apostles; but I do not find a single instance where a Christian was ever refused admission. Do you?”

I was listening intently, and his abrupt interrogation startled me.

“No,” I half drawled, “I think not; but what do you conclude from all that?”

“That the churches should do the same to-day.”

“Do you mean that they should cast aside all the standards of orthodoxy, and admit every one regardless of his faith?”

“Probably that would be the more theological way of putting it,” re-

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turned my companion, "but in my plainer way of thinking, faith in Christ, not in creed, should be the test." He paused for a moment, and then, apparently recalling my question, he added: "You do not get my thought, Mr. Grote. I would not cast away the theological statements, and standards of faith, nor would I have them lost to the world. They are no doubt of great value. My objection is not to them, but to the use to which they have been appropriated—I think they have been misappropriated."

"I think I fail entirely to get your view-point," I said.

"A good thing may be appropriated to a bad use, may it not?" he asked.

"Certainly," I replied.

"The best thing might be appropriated to the worst use, might it not?"

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"Possibly so," I answered.

He looked at me a moment thoughtfully; then the faintest smile played on his features, and he said:

"May be you noticed last week in the daily paper an account of a rather amusing police case in Kansas City. It appeared that the defendant was a large, powerful Irish woman, and the plaintiff (who was her husband) was a small irresolute looking chap, and had his face patched up with plasters and bandages. It developed that in a domestic altercation the defendant had snatched from over the door of their home a very beautiful motto, 'God Bless Our Home,' framed with a glass front, and smashed it over the head of the plaintiff. Did you notice the item in the paper?" he asked.

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"I did," I replied, "I read it aloud in my home for the amusement of my family."

"Do you remember the decree of the court?" he asked.

"I cannot recall that," I replied, after a moment's thought.

"Was it that all the mottoes, 'God Bless Our Home,' should be removed from the homes of Kansas City?"

"No; it wasn't that," I said, smiling.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," I replied.

"Why are you so sure, when you say you do not remember what the verdict was?"

"I could not but remember had it been so unusual and foolish a decree as that," I replied, half impatient at his cross-questioning.

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"You believe in mottoes in the home?" he asked.

"I certainly believe in good mottoes in the home," I answered, "and I know of no more beautiful and useful motto than that one."

"For what purpose should they be kept in the home?"

"Why, for the members of the home to read and meditate upon," I answered.

"And not to smash over each others' heads?"

"No," I replied.

"In that Kansas City case, was the fault in the motto or in the use to which it was put?"

"Why, of course, Uncle 'Bijah, it was not in the motto, but in the bad use to which it was put," I replied.

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“In other words, it was a misappropriation,” said the old man; “and that is exactly my idea of these creeds, church standards, or theological statements. I would not have them destroyed or lost to the world. But I think they should be preserved for study, for comparison, for meditation—and not for some members of the household to smash over the heads of others (as has too often been done). Mr. Grote, when the churches or you preachers use these theological statements to shut out from the churches men and women as true Christians as those you admit, it seems to me that is a misappropriation.”

“But I cannot concede your assumption that the theological statements shut out as true Christians as they admit,” I said, smiling.

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My companion looked at me sharply for a moment. There was an element of wonder, if not, indeed, amazement, in the look. And then he asked, in the most friendly tone:

“Which church in this town has the largest percentage of Christians in it?”

“I cannot answer that,” I replied.

“Will you tell me which one you *think* has the largest percentage?”

“To be perfectly frank in the matter,” I answered, “I should be very much in doubt, and should not want to venture even a guess.”

“If the theological standards of each of the churches were strictly applied they would shut out all or a part of the members of each of the other churches, would they not?”

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"Yes," I said, thoughtfully, "that, no doubt, would be true."

"Which would contain the larger percentage of Christians, those admitted or those rejected by such tests?"

The question was at first a little puzzling to me; not that I had not given the matter previous thought, for I had; but this was to me a novel way of putting it. Nor was I blind to the logical conclusion toward which he was leading me. I was resolved, however, to be as frank as was my companion, and I answered:

"I do not know; probably about equally divided."

"For instance," continued my friend, "the theological statement of the Disciples or Baptists would ex-

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clude a large part of your own members, would it not?"

"Yes."

"Do you think the religion of those excluded would be inferior to that of those admitted by such a test?"

"I do not," I replied.

"Or the theological statement of your own church would exclude nearly or quite all of the members of the Quaker Church?"

"It probably would," I answered.

"Do you believe that the Quaker Church has a lower percentage of Christians in it than have the other churches?"

"No, Uncle 'Bijah," I answered, "justice compels me to confess that I do not."

"Then," quietly continued my companion, "it seems to me that these

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theological standards neither make nor unmake Christians, or, in other words, are not tests of Christianity at all. Is it not then a misappropriation of them to make them tests of admission to the church?"

"But," I said, "suppose they were no longer made the theological standards for the churches; would not the emphasis upon the great truths contained in them be lost?"

"I believe the *truths* would fare all the better, and the errors the worse," he replied.

"I do not understand," I said.

"I was passing through Salina, Kansas, a few years ago on a business trip," said my companion, with an ease and apparent indifference that at first suggested to me that he had dismissed the whole matter in

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discussion and was relating to me a little disconnected story, "and spent the time while waiting for my train walking through the city. As I passed a cottage I noticed a very beautiful little girl playing in the yard. Her bright eyes, black hair, and rosy cheeks particularly attracted my attention. I had gone but a few paces when a little boy tripped past me, and an instant later I heard his voice ring out in a clear authoritative tone that caused me to stop and turn about.

"Say, Mary, is Charley in there?" he demanded.

"The little maiden's eyes flashed resentment, and her chin was lifted in a manner that seemed to ask, 'What right have you to speak to me that way?' but she only answered curtly:

"Yes."

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“ ‘You run in there, and tell him to come out here—HURRY!’

“I shall never forget the perfect picture the little girl presented, standing there erect, eyes sparkling with independence, cheeks flushed, lips firm, her finger raised in defiance, as she said very slowly and emphatically :

“ ‘I—don’t—have—to. You ain’t my papa nor my mamma.’

“I could not but admire her spirit. I have not a doubt that had she been asked in a courteous manner for the favor it would have been cheerfully granted. Whether right or wrong, it’s the American spirit of independence—the spirit that demands *the recognition of equality*. But it seems to me also the Christian spirit, for was it not Christ that said, ‘One is

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your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren?' It's not more what is offered than the manner in which it is offered that determines its acceptance or rejection. The assumption of superiority in dictating another's religious faith seems to me un-American and un-Scriptural. While with a people that from their childhood have been taught that they are subordinate to their rulers, that their wills, pleasure, convenience, and even their lives are subject to the will or the wish of a king, a czar, or a tyrant, this assumption of superiority in dictating their religious faith, or prescribing the conditions under which they may be admitted to church membership, even though those requirements are admittedly not essential to acceptance with Christ, may be tolerable:

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but with a people taught from their youth that all men are born equal, a people that recognize no human authority save that constituted by their own act, that know no rulers save those made by their own franchise, and in whose country there is no position of authority or honor to which their own children may not become eligible, such an attitude is offensive, and defeats its own purpose."

I was drinking in the eloquence and apt illustrations of the speaker, quite unconscious of all else; and when he stopped I found myself leaning forward, my elbow resting on the table, my chin in my hand, and my mind startlingly in agreement with his argument. After a little pause, he added quietly, but with convincing clearness:

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"I may be mistaken; but it seems to me that this un-American and un-Christian attitude of the churches is responsible for much, if not for most, of the friction among denominations, and keeps many out of the churches."

"But have you considered what endless troubles and disturbances and divisions there would necessarily be in a church that would admit all these people with their various and often contradictory faith, Uncle 'Bijah?" I asked.

"What does your church hold as to mode of baptism?" he asked, apparently ignoring my question.

"The Methodist Church is very broad on that subject, as you know, granting entire liberty of choice to its members," I replied.

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"Have there ever been any divisions in the Methodist Church?"

"Yes, a good many."

"Has it ever divided upon the subject of baptism?"

"I think not," I answered.

"Did you ever know of that subject's causing troubles, disturbances, or divisions in your churches?"

"I never did," I was forced to admit, after a moment's thought.

"Have not all your divisions been caused by doctrines your church has attempted to define, and not by doctrines touching which you have granted liberty of opinion?"

"So far as I am able now to recall, that is true," I answered.

"What is the best revival meeting you have ever known in this town?"

"Beyond doubt," I replied, "the

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meetings a year ago last winter were the best I have ever known here; in fact, they were the best I have ever taken part in."

"What was the agreement for those meetings?"

"I do not understand you," I replied.

"As to the relation of all the churches in the town," he said.

"All the churches united in the effort," I answered.

"Did not you ministers and pastors have an agreement that none of the theological statements that are distinctive of your individual churches should be preached during the meetings?"

"Well, I guess that was about the understanding," I admitted, a little reluctantly.

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"Did you keep that agreement?"

"I think we did," I replied.

"Was it a good agreement?" persisted my questioner.

"I think it was," I answered.

"Do you believe the conversions and other effects of the meeting were genuine?"

"I felt, and have ever since felt, deeply impressed to that effect," I answered.

"Were there any troubles, disturbances, or divisions during that meeting?"

"None that I know of."

"Why was that?"

"May I not ask you that question, Uncle 'Bijah?"

"You would like to know how it looks to an outsider, eh?"

"I would," I replied.

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“Well, I have fed cattle a good deal in my time, and in about every conceivable way, too. I have fattened them for the market, and I have starved them through when feed was scarce. I have noticed that when cattle are fed a good balanced ration of pure wholesome feed, and given all they want, they become fat and sleek and healthy, and after they are acquainted they seldom ever use their horns except in play; but when they are fed on musty straw, or run on a stubble field, they get thin and lean and rough and out of condition; and the leaner and rougher they get and the more their systems get out of condition, the wickeder they get with their horns.”

Ding, went the clock. I glanced up

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and saw that the hands pointed to half-past nine.

“May I call to-morrow evening, Uncle 'Bijah?” I asked.

“If you will be so kind,” he replied with delightful grace.

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“I’VE been thinking a good deal about your cattle illustration since last evening,” I said, as I seated myself before the fire. “In fact, I’ve been unable to get away from it all day to-day. We do feed our flocks too much straw and too little wholesome fattening food ; and I believe the more straw and the less fattening food we feed them the more they horn.”

“I have another observation to make,” said my companion, “though I fear you may not fully agree with me. You remember last evening you admitted that you ministers had an agreement (which you kept) not to preach the doctrines that were pecu-

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liar to your own churches—the doctrines that divided the churches, but to preach the things believed by all Christians. Am I correct?”

“I think you are about right in that,” I replied with an inward flinch, for I could not fail to foresee the logical conclusion, nor did I see any way of evading it.

“Would it be an unfair inference that the doctrines that divide Christians are largely theological straw, and the things held in common by all Christians are the balanced ration, the fattening food?” He did not wait for an answer to his question (for which I was truly thankful), but went right on. “In about every community, and in almost every church, there are a few, sometimes preachers, sometimes deacons, sometimes just

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ordinary members, generally men, though occasionally women are found among them, who seem to live on straw alone. They do not appear to have much appetite for anything else. They grow horns. They are always spiritually lean. They're the hookers. The more hookers there are the more buildings you have to have to shelter your herds. How many church houses are there in this town, Mr. Grote?"

"About twenty, I think," I replied.

"Do you prefer a full house at your services or a small audience?"

"I prefer a full house."

"Which is the easier to preach to?"

"A full house."

"Which is the more encouraging to those present?"

"No doubt a full house."

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"What is the average seating capacity of the houses of this town?"

"Probably three or four hundred," I replied, after a little consideration.

"What is the average attendance?"

"I do not know," I answered, "but think it may be about one hundred fifty."

"You're too high," returned my companion. That's about your own; but the churches of the entire town will not average that. I attend about all of them. I do not think they will average more than one hundred, if that. Had it ever occurred to you that here is a waste—I might say an enormous waste—of funds, and also of other things of much greater importance?"

"Yes; I have thought a good deal of that," I replied, with some feeling.

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“And has it occurred to you that it is an imposition on the business men and other citizens of a community to ask them to erect other houses of worship when already there are more than double the accommodations that are really used or needed, erected largely at their expense?”

“Though I had not thought of it before in that way,” I replied, “I confess it seems to me you are right.”

“I was in the cattle business in the eighties,” continued my old friend. “It was the transition period, by which I mean the times when we were changing from the old time ‘Texas rangers’ to the better breeds. Well, sir, half a dozen of those old long-horned Texans could occupy a whole barn, and then complain for want of room. I had shelter enough for all

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my cattle, but many a time I went out in the midst of a blizzard and found a dozen or fifteen old long-legged, lean, long-horned Texas steers backed up under the shed, guarding every entrance; and out in the corral, taking the storm, were my Shorthorns and Herefords and Angus; and whenever an animal of the better breeds tried to get under the shelter, one of those old lean self-constituted 'guardians of the door' lunged out at him, and drove him away, and then backed up under the shelter again."

"I see the application," I said, laughing, "but what's the remedy?"

"Dehorning."

The manner in which he spoke the word, the expression of his face, and his unexpected reply provoked me to laughter.

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"I beg your pardon," I said, as soon as I could control my voice, "but I do not mean the Texas steers. I mean the church members. What is the remedy with them?"

"Dehorning," he repeated, in the same confident, final tone. And then after a moment's pause, he continued: "Let me tell you a little experience I once had. It was probably in the nineties. I was riding out in the country past a neighbor's, when the man hailed me, and asked if I would buy a cow, saying his son was going away, and wanted to sell his cow. I told him I would buy her if she was priced so I thought I could make something on her. He took me to the pasture, and showed me a pretty hard looking old cow, but priced her so low that I bought her, and gave him my

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check in payment, stipulating that he should deliver her. The following day he drove up with the old cow tied behind his wagon. She looked harder than ever, and I realized that I had paid too much for her, but did not tell him so."

" 'Where do you want her?' he asked.

" 'We'll put her in the lot there with the calves for the present,' I answered. There was a rack filled with bright green alfalfa hay (absolutely the finest feed in the world for cows). She looked empty and hungry and lean and weak, and I thought she would certainly enjoy a feast like that. Wouldn't you have thought so?"

"It certainly would seem so," I replied.

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“That’s the way it seemed to me, but it looked different to that old cow. She just lowered her head and lit into that bunch of calves with an energy you never would have dreamed she could possess. She started down one side of the rack, and horned every calf away; and then whipped round the end of the rack, and came back on the other side, clearing that. One calf had his head down in the manger, and did not see her in time, and she tossed him into the manger on his back. Had there been no one to help him out he probably would have died there.” He paused a moment, eyeing me steadily, then asked: “If you were guessing, what would you guess I did?”

“Well,” I replied, smiling, “I should

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guess you helped the calf out of the manger."

"You guessed right," he replied, smiling in return; "that was the first thing I did; and then I yelled at the top of my voice:

" 'John!' and the man that was working for me came running out of the barn.

" 'Yessir,' he answered, stopping at the barn door.

" 'Come here, and bring the lasso and dehorning saw,' I called.

"I kept the old horner away from the rack and the calves until he arrived.

" 'Catch her,' I said.

"He tossed the rope, and, being a good roper, caught her the first throw.

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“ ‘Draw her up to that post,’ I commanded.

“ ‘W’at ye goin’ t’ do?’ he asked.

“ ‘Dehorn her.’

“ ‘Don’t ye think we’d better put ’er in the schute?’ he asked.

“ ‘Schute nothing,’ I said, ‘draw her up to that post.’

“ ‘I b’lieve we’d save time to take ’er roun’ to the dehornin’ schute,’ he ventured.

“ ‘I’m not trying to save time; draw her up to that post,’ I answered with more emphasis than I ought. He did; and I sawed her horns off. I never enjoyed dehorning a creature better in my life than I did that old cow. It was a good thing for her. After that she could see alfalfa hay, and it seemed to taste better to her. And it

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was a whole lot better for the calves. Do you catch my idea?"

"I think I do," I said, laughing.

"Is it not true that there are a few in almost every church that seem to live largely on dogma, that are always insisting upon preaching and teaching those doctrines that most Christians do not accept and that are generally offensive to them, thus stirring up and keeping up sectarian strife, doctrines that would prevent such a meeting as we had two years ago and kill most any other; and is it not true that as a rule such persons are religiously lean and bony and skinny—largely horns?"

"I'm afraid there's a good deal of truth in what you are saying," I replied, now too much absorbed to be amused; "yet many of those doctrines

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are true, and should not be cast ruthlessly aside."

"I am not questioning their truth, but their relative importance. Are they essential to a Christian life?"

"Which?" I asked.

"The ones that divide Christians," he replied.

I realized that I was cornered, and there was no way of escape. If I answered in the affirmative he would remind me of my admission that there were Christians on either side of every controverted doctrine; if I answered in the negative, then their relative unimportance was conceded. I was resolved to answer truthfully regardless of consequences, and I replied:

"I think not. But," I added, "even conceding that, what would you do

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with them, and what would you do with the Christians that differ so widely on those questions?"

"Do you see a face on the log there?" he asked, pointing toward the great burning backlog.

"No," I replied, after looking closely at the spot toward which he was pointing.

"I do," he replied. "Do you doubt my word?"

"Not in the least," I answered.

"Nor do I doubt yours when you say you do not see the same image. I have fallen into a habit," he continued, still looking into the fire, his fine honest face lighted up with its glow, "which seems to grow with the years, of passing many restive, meditative moments, even hours, especially when alone, tracing images on the

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burning logs." He sat silent for a moment; then his face lighted with a smile, and he added: "I remember one incident that may illustrate the point we were discussing. It was many years ago. I was a child of six or seven. Grandmother was raising a little orphan boy, a cousin of mine, two years younger than I. He and I used to pass many long winter evenings sitting side by side picking out images in the great old fire-place in grandmother's home. One evening I discovered a very distinct image, and what seemed to me a very remarkable one, and pointing to it, said:

" 'Mart, looky there.'

" 'What is it?' he asked, looking in the direction I was pointing.

" 'A lion,' I exclaimed.

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“ ‘That ain’t no lion—that’s a house,’ he said.

“ ‘It’s a lion,’ I shouted.

“ ‘I don’t see no lion,’ he replied, with equal emphasis.

“I got down so close I nearly burned my finger :

“ ‘There’s his head, and there’s his tail,’ I said: ‘that’s a lion.’

“ ‘That ain’t no lion—that’s a house,’ he repeated.

“I hit him with my elbow. I would have thrashed him if grandmother had not spoken just then. The idea of his calling a *lion* a *house*! I would have pounded him until he said it was a lion whether he believed it or not. Was not that the spirit of sectarianism? After all, what mattered it if his childish fancy traced the outlines of a house, and mine the outlines

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of a lion? Was that a matter of great importance? What was the real, vital question? It was this: Were we not both warmed by the same glowing fire? Did we not look into each other's face by the same God-given light? And so I think of the doctrines that Christians permit to divide them—they may be interesting and even instructive; but the real vital warmth of God's love, the light of the gospel of His salvation are found, not in them, but in *the things that are common to all Christians.*"

The clock struck half-past nine. I had no opportunity therefore to reply, for which I was truly thankful, for I did not wish to mar the beautiful picture he had painted upon the canvas of my memory. I therefore

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rose, and, bowing, said, "Good-night," and went quietly out into the crisp, winter night.

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“UNCLE 'BIJAH,” I said, as I seated myself the following evening before the fire, and felt with pleasure its warming rays, for it was snowing outside, and the temperature had fallen considerably, “I have a question that has been on my mind since we parted last evening, and that I should like to have you answer.”

Uncle 'Bijah looked at me with the quiet, modest, yet fearless expression of the practical business man that he was, but said nothing.

“I have been deeply interested in these evening talks,” I said, “and they have furnished me food for much thought and meditation; and I con-

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fess that to much that you have said I am strongly inclined to agree. But it seems to me that your position is largely iconoclastic. Is it not?"

"I think your criticism is warranted, for no doubt that is true," he replied.

"Would it not be very unwise to tear down a building because it possessed faults of architecture or structure, even very serious faults, unless one were able to erect in its place a better one?"

"True—that is very true," said my companion, thoughtfully. "But every error has its opposing truth. In every reformation three things seem to be necessary: first, to detect the error; second, to know its opposing truth; and third, to discover and apply an efficient means of substitution.

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Now, in the matter we are discussing the error to which I object is the using of theological standards that are not tests of Christianity as tests for admission to the churches; its opposing truth, as I see it, is this: the final condition of acceptance with God should be the final condition of acceptance with the church; the means of substitution seems to me very simple, and has already been demonstrated."

"I am not sure that I understand you," I said.

My companion rose, and going to a book shelf took from it a strong leather bound Bible, showing marks of much careful use, and reseating himself took from it a sheet of paper, saying as he did so:

"Here are three propositions that I wrote a good many years ago, and

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to which I have given a good deal of thought, and that I believe to be true.

"1. There is authority in the Bible for but one church.

"2. That church should be so organized and governed as to offer a home to every child of God; or, in other words, should be composed of all the Christians in the community in which it is.

"3. No church that knowingly, intentionally, wilfully shuts out a single child of God has a Scriptural right to exist."

"Please let me see that," I said, and he handed me the slip of paper.

"It is the first time I have ever shown them to any one," he said, after I had studied them for a few minutes, "and I should like to know what you think of them."

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"Well," I said, "I think they are worthy of consideration."

"How about the first?" he asked.

"O," I replied, "that's true. Of course, there is authority in the Bible for but one church."

"How about the second?"

"Well," I answered, examining it carefully for a flaw, and finding none, "that's true, too; for of course if there were but one church it would necessarily have to offer a home to all Christians."

"How about the third?" persisted my questioner.

I read them all over again slowly and carefully.

"The third sounds a little harsh, Uncle 'Bijah," I said, "but I see no

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way to separate it from the other two. It seems to be a logical sequence."

"That's the way they looked to me," said my companion, with a satisfied smile. "It's a good deal like a schute—when you start a steer in at one end there's no turning round or jumping over the side—he's got to go straight through. Isn't that right?"

"I found it so," I said, laughing.

"Do you think if Christ were on earth, and in charge of a church, He would shut out a single Christian?"

"I admit that you are right," I said; "but you say this has already been demonstrated."

"Hasn't it?"

"In what way?" I asked.

"In a number of ways and a num-

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ber of instances," he replied. "For instance, our own meetings here two years ago. Have we ever had equal results from separate efforts by the churches of this community? In fact, was not more accomplished in a few days than has been accomplished in separate efforts in years?"

"I agree with you there," I answered.

"Then look at the great evangelists," continued my friend, "Moody, Gipsy Smith, Billy Sunday, and all the others. Do they not require the churches of the community in which they are to conduct meetings to get together, to forget for the time their divisions; and do they not all refrain from preaching those things that cause divisions among Christians?"

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"You are no doubt right in all that," I said.

"Then is not the Christian Endeavor Society founded upon the same basis? Is not the only requirement for membership simply Christian character? And does not its wonderful growth testify strongly to the correctness of its position?"

"Would you have the church adopt the same basis of admission?" I asked.

"I would gladly if I could," replied my companion. "I attended the State Christian Endeavor Convention two years ago. There were over five thousand young people in attendance, representing all the leading Protestant churches of the State—Methodist, Presbyterian, Disciple, Baptist, Quaker, and all the others—in the most

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beautiful fellowship I ever witnessed, sitting side by side, and laboring hand in hand. Mr. Grote, as I looked into the faces of that great gathering of young Christians, and listened to their deliberations, it seemed to me I read there the fate of sectarianism."

"When do you think such a condition will prevail?" I asked.

"May be with the coming of the next generation," he replied.

"Why not with this?" I asked.

"Why does it not prevail now?" he asked in return.

I thought for a moment, and then replied:

"I believe, Uncle 'Bijah, it is for want of love among the professed followers of Christ."

"No doubt that is a great hin-

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drance," he replied; "but not the greatest."

"Not the greatest!" I repeated incredulously. "Pray, then, what is the greatest?"

"Blindness," he replied, with such positiveness, there seemed no room for doubt.

"Blindness?" I again repeated.

"Yes, blindness," he replied. "I suppose you would call it spiritual blindness. Do you remember the text in the first chapter of the first epistle of John that reads: 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another?'"

"I remember it quite well; it's a familiar and rather a favorite text with me, Uncle 'Bijah," I said, "but I'm inclined to think you see more in

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it than I have been able to see. Will you tell me what it means to you?"

"You notice the tense of the verb is present," he said, with an expression that indicated that he attached much importance to that item.

"Yes," I said.

"It doesn't say *ought*, or *may*, or *will*; but it says, 'We *have* fellowship one with another.' "

"Yes," I repeated again; but I knew from his face that mine was a disappointment to him, and also that he saw (or thought he saw) in the text something that I did not see.

"I knew a man once who killed his boy while they were fighting Indians in the dark. That wasn't a lack of love, but a lack of light," he said, resorting to his habit of making clear his point by illustration.

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"Yes," I said, leaning forward in my eagerness to catch his point, but failing to see the application, "but how does that apply to the churches or to Christians?"

"Well, here is the way it seems to me," he said reflectively: "the Quaker that can't see the Christian life in his Baptist neighbor, or the Baptist that can't see the Christian life in his Methodist or Presbyterian neighbor, or the Methodist or Presbyterian that can't see the Christian life in his Quaker neighbor, or the Disciple that can't see the Christian life in any of them, must be walking in darkness. Am I right?" he asked with startling directness.

"I think your statement is true," I replied, "but your picture is certainly overdrawn, for surely as a rule Chris-

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tians of all denominations see and recognize the Christian life in members of other churches than their own."

"That seems to me the more dangerous horn of the dilemma," he said, with a severity in his voice that was not usual.

"I confess I do not get your point," I said.

"The dilemma," he replied, reverting to his usual kindly manner, "presents itself to me like this: either Christians do see and recognize the Christian life in members of other churches, or they do not. If they do not, then we are agreed that the text teaches that they are walking in darkness; if they do, then why should they refuse fellowship and *membership* to those in whom they recognize the

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Christian life? It seems to me (though I confess that my vision may be at fault, but it seems to me), that this is the more dangerous horn of the dilemma—just as to err in darkness would be less culpable than to err knowingly.”

He paused for my response, I knew. Of course I could have entered upon a discussion of the distinctions between fellowship and membership, and the theological standards of the churches and their value and uses, but I did not feel an inclination to do so.

“Mr. Grote,” he said, leaning toward me earnestly, “I believe that as a rule touching this particular point, sinful men see where Christians are blind. Infidels, even saloon-keepers, gamblers and thieves, seldom err in

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their recognition of Christian men and women. I recall a little story that I once heard or read," he said, after a moment's reflection, "that, it occurs to me, somewhat illustrates my point. The story, as nearly as I can recall it, ran about as follows:

"Years ago, before checks were in common use, and men had to carry considerable money with them when traveling, a certain infidel banker and his son were traveling on horseback across the State of Illinois. They lost their way, and night overtook them in the woods. After they had wandered about for some time they came to a little log house, and secured permission to remain all night. After supper they were assigned to one of the two rooms of the house to sleep. The banker called his son to him, and in a

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whispered tone advised him that he was suspicious of the surroundings, and thought best for them to keep watch, for they had with them considerable money.

“‘You watch until midnight,’ he said to his son, ‘and then wake me and I will watch the remainder of the night.’ So he undressed, and went to bed.

“‘Now,’ he said, addressing his son, ‘get the revolver out of the saddle-bags, put out the light, and go and watch them for a little while through that hole in the partition wall.’

“The young man obeyed, and after watching for awhile slipped back to the bed, and whispered :

“‘They’ve gathered round the table, and are talking, but I cannot hear what they say.’

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“ ‘Go back and watch again,’ said the father.

“Again the young man went back and watched, and after awhile returned to the bed, and reported :

“ ‘The man has taken down a large book, and is reading.’

“ ‘Go back, and watch again,’ said the banker.

“The young man obeyed again, and presently returned to the bedside, and said :

“ ‘They’re kneeling, and the man is praying.’

“ ‘We’re safe,’ said the banker; ‘you may undress, and come to bed.’

“That was an infidel,” said my companion, after a moment’s pause. “If he had been a Christian, would he have said: ‘Go back again, and see if

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you can learn what church they belong to?" "

"Mr. Grote," he said, after another pause, during which he sat in the deepest thought, "that infidel saw enough there that night to know he was in a Christian home, and therefore safe; *and so did I.*"

"And so did I," I responded, scarce conscious that I was speaking.

"I would rather have seen what that infidel banker saw there that night as evidence that I was in a Christian home than to have examined the church rolls of that neighborhood," continued my companion.

The clock sounded half-past nine.

"So would I," I returned, rising, and taking my hat.

"Then why should the church require more for admission?" said the

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old man, talking, it seemed to me, rather to himself than to me.

“I shall give that question more thought, Uncle 'Bijah,” I said. “Good-night.” And I went out into the storm with that question ringing in my ears.

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“**D**O you remember Peter’s vision at Joppa, Mr. Grote?” asked my dear old friend, whom I was coming to love and value more and more with each association.

“Quite distinctly, I think,” I replied.

“And do you remember what the ‘voice’ said to him when he refused to eat?”

“‘What God hath cleansed, call not thou common,’ ” I repeated. The passage was easily recalled, for I had used it as a text not a month before.

“When is a man cleansed?”

“When he is converted.”

“I was present at your service yes-

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terday, when you received into your church several young people."

"Yes, I saw you there."

"Among them Lillian and Arthur Townsend."

"Yes."

"Did you notice that their father and mother were crying when they went forward, and shook hands with you?"

"I recall that they were."

"Do you know why?"

"I supposed for joy."

"Partly for joy, and partly sorrow."

"Sorrow!" I repeated in astonishment.

"Yes," answered my friend, "it was both joy and sorrow, I think. You may not know that they were members with my parents of the old

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Quaker Church of this town. The house was burned down years before your time here. The congregation was too weak to rebuild, and the church gradually died out. In fact, I know of no other members now living here. They are near neighbors and close friends of mine. Outside my own family I know no one more thoroughly than them. I never knew either of them to repeat a scandal, to circulate a report (either false or true) that would injure another, to be guilty of deception or misrepresentation, or in any other way to wrong their fellow men; nor have I ever known a person with stronger faith in the Bible or God's promises."

"I know Brother and Sister Townsend quite well," I replied. "I have been in their home, and have often

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met them in my church; and I have come to hold the same opinion of them. But pray tell me why you say they were weeping partly from sorrow."

"Two weeks ago yesterday," he answered, "they spent most of the afternoon visiting me here; and during the visit told me of their children's intention to unite with the church. I remember quite distinctly one sentence from Mrs. Townsend that will probably fully answer your question. Her eyes were filled with tears, as she said: 'O, I'm glad the children will have a church home; but it does seem so hard that conditions are such that they must go where their parents cannot go with them.' Mr. Grote," he said, turning to me abruptly, "suppose they had gone forward at your

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invitation, and when you asked the question, 'Do you believe the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church?' had answered 'No,' as in honesty they would have had to do; what would you have done?"

He was looking into my face with an earnest, kindly searching gaze that seemed to pierce my very soul. What would I have done? Had I not put that very hypothetical case before myself more than once before? What would I have done? What would I have done if the Christian parents of those young people had asked for a home in the church with their children because they had no church home of their own, and had answered "No" because they did not accept some of the teachings of the church?

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Though I had before asked myself the question, I had never answered it; nor was I ready to answer it now; so I replied:

"Uncle 'Bijah, I shall consider that question further; but I want to thank you for calling my attention again to that text."

"Suppose you had rejected them," persisted my questioner, "would not that have been a violation of the admonition to Peter, 'What God hath cleansed, call not that common or unclean?' "

"That matter shall be a subject of future thought and prayer with me, Uncle 'Bijah," I replied.

"We will drop that subject," he said, evidently recognizing my willingness to do so. "I have a question I should like to ask you."

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"Certainly," I replied.

"What do you consider the strongest evidence of the correctness of a church creed or standard of faith?"

"Its resemblance to the Bible," I replied, without hesitation or doubt.

"That's exactly the answer I should have given," he said, his face lighting with pleasure. "The closer it resembles the Bible, the better it is?"

"Exactly."

"Something like a photograph?"

"Very much so," I replied; and then catching the full significance of his illustration, I added: "your comparison is admirable."

He rose from his chair, and took from the wall, where it was hanging beside the fire-place, a life-size bust picture, and, setting it on the table between us where we could both view it, asked:

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“Do you know that picture?”

“I’ve had it in my mind several times to ask you whose picture it is,” I answered; “from resemblance I’ve guessed it’s a picture of you when you were a young man. Am I right?”

“It’s a picture of my only brother, Mr. Grote,” he replied, with a touch of feeling in his voice that I had never heard before. “He was two years younger than I, and I think that seldom did two brothers love with a deeper affection than did we. The picture is a good one, and represents him as I last knew him, for he died less than a year after the picture from which this was made was taken. You do not know how highly I prize that picture,” he continued, and I saw tears in his eyes, fixed tenderly on the picture. Then turning his face from

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the picture to me, he said in a hushed, earnest voice: "But for all that, were my brother living, and I had a chance to exchange that picture for one hour with him, how gladly would I make the exchange!"

The old eyes filled, and, taking a handkerchief from his pocket, he dried the tears, and then in an apologetic tone said:

"Excuse me, I had only intended to illustrate. What I want to ask is: Is not the Bible better than any creed? In fact, like even the best photograph, is it not likely that the best creed ever written by men contains some error? And is it not therefore wrong to reject from church membership one who in honesty is compelled to say 'No' because he does not believe all the creed, when he

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could say 'Yes' to believing all the Bible? Is not that a violation of the meaning of the text? If Christ were in your place would He do it?"

"Uncle 'Bijah," I said, "I know you have not asked those questions for me to answer, but for my consideration, and I assure you they shall have that. It is past the hour and I will bid you good-night," and I left him holding the picture with one hand, and waving me good-night with the other, a gentle smile upon his venerable face. Ah! little did I think it should be the last time I should see my dear old friend alive; and as I write to-day I recall that beautiful picture with a feeling of thanksgiving that it was mine to know him so closely and so well.

THE CLOUD AND THE CLEAR SKY

IT was about ten o'clock the following morning. I was sitting in my study trying to answer my friend's questions of the evening before. I well knew the answer he would give to them, and I could find no fault with it; but it was difficult (in truth, the more I pondered the matter, the more it seemed impossible) to reconcile that answer with my position as a minister and pastor. I was suddenly aroused from this rather troubled study by the ringing of the door-bell. Its quick repetition impressed me that the one at the door

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was excited, and I hastened to the door, and opened it.

“O Mister Grote, I think grandpa’s dead! Do come quick!”

An excited little girl sobbed out the sad intelligence, and before I could ask a question, turned, and ran back down the walk. It was little Marguerite, Uncle 'Bijah's grandchild. I snatched my hat from the hook, and ran after the child; but did not overtake her swift feet. When I reached the house I found two doctors there examining and working over the body of my friend. The body was lying on the sofa in the room where we had spent the past few delightful evenings. I had been there scarcely a minute, I suppose, when the doctors exchanged knowing looks, and the old doctor, turning to Mrs. Major, Uncle

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'Bijah's daughter, said solemnly and feelingly :

"It's no use; he's gone."

I asked Mr. Major if there was anything I could do, and he said there was nothing, but requested that I return after noon. I promised to do so, and then trying to speak a word of comfort to the weeping daughter and the sobbing grandchildren, I returned to my home, my heart full and aching. When I told the sad news at home my wife and children and I all wept as if it had been a near relative that had passed away, so near and dear was the old man to all of us.

When I returned in the afternoon Mrs. Major sat down beside me, and told me the brief story of his death.

"Marguerite went to father's room," she said, "with some pecan

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kernels she had picked out for him, but returned with them in her hand, saying: 'Grandpa's asleep, with his head lying on the table.' He often took a nap during the day, but always lay down on the couch; and, thinking he might not be resting easy, I slipped into his room, and found him lying with his head resting upon his arms, which were folded across the open Bible. He was in a perfectly natural position, and I had no thought but that he was asleep, and hesitated to wake him; but, thinking he would rest better on this couch, I touched him, and spoke to him. He did not stir. I shook him lightly, and called him again. Still he did not stir. I became alarmed, and, placing my hand under his forehead, I raised his head from the table, and saw—that

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he was dead." A sob shook her form, and she was silent for a moment, and then proceeded. "I ran to the telephone, and called my husband from the bank; and in a few minutes he was here, and a little later the doctors arrived. You know the rest," she said, with a sigh.

"The Bible, Mrs. Major," I said, "do you know at what place it was open?"

"I think it's just as he left it," she replied, with deep, tender interest. "Come; we'll see," and she led the way into his room.

The Bible lay open upon his writing-table. I stepped eagerly forward. I cannot express to you my feelings, for it was open at the first chapter of the first epistle of John. The seventh verse was enclosed in brackets,

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and each word was underscored with heavy lines: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

* * * * *

I do not remember ever having seen before or since so large a funeral congregation as assembled to pay respect to the memory of Uncle 'Bijah. Every foot of space in our large building was occupied, and it seemed to me there were fully half as many outside.

What text could I choose save the one Uncle 'Bijah's eyes had last rested upon? Nor had I considered any other from the time I was asked to preach the funeral discourse.

I told briefly the story of the inci-

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dents set forth in this little volume; and, concluding, I repeated those questions he had asked me only two days before:

“Is not the Bible better than any creed written by men? Like the best photograph, is it not likely that even the best creed contains some error? Is it not wrong to reject from membership one who in honesty is compelled to say ‘No’ because he does not believe all the creed, when he could say ‘Yes’ to believing all the Bible? Would not that constitute a violation of the command of the ‘Voice’ to Peter in his vision at Joppa? If Christ were in your place, would He do it?”

I paused. There was profound silence, and attention that seemed intense. Up to that moment I had nev-

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er fully answered those questions for myself. My eyes rested for a moment upon the casket covered with beautiful wreaths, and the great heaps of roses and wild flowers piled on either side by loving, tender hands. Suddenly the answer seemed to come to me with a force that seized me, and carried me with it, and I continued:

“There can be but one final answer to those questions:—Were Jesus here as pastor of any church in this town, surely He would not reject such as he whose body lies in the casket there,—nor from this day will I. I shall no more ask the question, ‘Do you believe the Holy Scriptures as taught by this church?’ but ‘Do you believe the Holy Scriptures as taught by Jesus of Nazareth?’ ”

I was almost startled by the re-

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sponse from the great audience—fervent “amens” from all over the house.

After the casket had been lowered into the grave, and the services closed, as I turned to leave the ground, Mr. Andrews, the cashier of the National Bank, and superintendent of our Sunday-school, grasped me by the hand, and, his face indicating his deep earnestness, said:

“God bless you, Brother Grote; you expressed to-day what I have felt for years, but feared I was wrong, as I had never heard it announced from the pulpit. I assure you of my heartiest support in your position, and I believe it will meet the approval of our entire brotherhood.”

And so it did—but that is a story of itself; and the story I had started to tell is ended.

EVENINGS WITH UNCLE 'BIJAH

Yonder in the cemetery is a beautiful monument, erected by Uncle 'Bijah's children and grandchildren, with the following inscription:

ABIJAH JOHNSON DREW

Born Jan. 18, 1827

Died Feb. 9, 1897

One who loved God and his fellow men

And lived the principle of

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1:7.



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